

# Monstress

#4

§1 (Have we lost our minds?)



Weeeeee!



"Oh Brad, I know you love me but you can't borrow my leopard print bikini."

JORDAN

goat or rabbit if you like. I hear rats make good pets. If you have a rat, write me and let me know about your experiences. Maybe I'll just get one of those toy dashboard dogs with the bobbing head instead.

WFLV  
90.7 FM

Since I am currently unemployed and don't have a whole lot of money, I thought it was wise for me to listen to a public radio station, because of the lack of commercials. I don't want to be reminded of my poverty every other song. Plus, they play folk-rock all day. I would have never considered myself a fan of folk before, but it's found a place in my heart. Besides, where else can you hear Dolly Parton singing a *Collective Soul* song?

A nice little side effect to my new WFLV addiction is that I now know what is happening in the world thanks to the hourly news updates. And unlike the big commercial radio station I used to listen to, these news updates never mention what happened on *Survivor* the night before. Actually, I still listen to the commercial station in the morning when I'm getting dressed or when I drive out of WFLV's range, but that's it.

When I was still employed, I used to listen to WFLV on the Internet. Then they had a pledge drive and mentioned how every person who listens on the Internet costs them \$114. I couldn't listen after that because I felt too guilty that I couldn't afford to give them money. I only started listening again when I was back on the radio. I know I have misplaced guilt, but that's what makes life interesting.

Random Recipe  
Pineapple Upside-down Cake

I like this recipe because not only does it taste good, it seems like a church-lady dessert. It reminds me of something my grandmother would have clipped out of *Good Housekeeping*. And I like any recipe that uses canned pineapple and maraschino cherries.

1/4 cup butter  
2/3 cup packed brown sugar  
1 can sliced pineapple

Maraschino cherries  
1 1/3 cup all-purpose flour  
1 cup granulated sugar  
1/3 cup shortening  
3/4 cup milk  
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1 egg

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Heat butter in a 10-inch oven-proof skillet or 9x9x2 glass pan in oven until melted. Sprinkle brown sugar over butter and arrange pineapple slices with a cherry in the center of each pineapple slice. Beat remaining ingredients on low speed for 30 seconds, scraping the bowl constantly. Beat on high speed for 3 minutes and pour over the fruit in the pan. Bake the skillet for 45 to 50 minutes, square for 50 to 55 minutes or until a wooden skewer inserted in the center comes out clean. Immediately invert onto a heat proof plate. Let the pan remain over the cake for a few minutes and serve.

Lodge Cast Iron Pans

My mother's boyfriend gave me a set: dutch oven, two skillets and a griddle. I suppose he was trying to win my affections (or to quell my disapproval) with cookware. It worked. The path to my heart is lined with cast iron. Cooked with cast iron when I was growing up, but when moved out I was too poor to buy anything but aluminum. Mom has a theory that aluminum, in pans and soda cans causes Alzheimer's disease. I'm not sure she's right, but I feel there's something unnatural about non-stick.

I followed the directions for seasoning the pans, washed them first, let them dry on the drainboard, and everything rusted. Undeterred, I tried to wash the rust off, dried them thoroughly and coated all surfaces with vegetable oil. After an hour in the oven at 325, my apartment smelled like popcorn, which gave me a headache. I brave this kind of pain because I know that in 20 years, nothing will stick to this stuff. It's a serious commitment to make, but when I dream of crispy fried chicken, sweet corn bread and fluffy pancakes for generations to come



# Oh Baby, Oh Baby, Oh Baby!

## Good Eats Food Network

One would think that I have something better to do than just sit around watching cooking shows on the Food Network. But one would think wrong. And even if I did have something more exciting to do, I would still watch *Good Eats* because not only is it entertaining but educational as well. Host Alton Brown explains in layman's terms not only how a food product is produced, it's practical applications, it's historical context but also the chemistry, biology and physics involved in the cooking process. It's usually more information than I need to know, but it's helpful when a recipe inevitably goes wrong. Or you can sound really smart at a dinner party when you explain in detail why the host's cheese souffle fell. But then you wouldn't get invited back again. Just remember, dinner parties are horribly overrated, but a good steak is not.

My Aunt Carole uses Alton's recipe for turkey every year at Thanksgiving. The secret is an overnight soak in a brine solution then cooking it hot and fast. The house fills up with smoke, but it is a fabulous turkey. The skin is crispy while the meat is juicy and flavorful. I was hoping for the same success when I tried his recipe for fondue. It didn't really work out, but I don't think that's Alton's fault. I used too much lemon juice so the cheese became lumpy. And I used a fondue pot with a sterno rather than an electric skillet, which Alton recommended. I have yet to get all the burned bits of cheese off the bottom of the darn pot.

## Trying Paul Fairall

I admit that I am not an impartial reviewer because Paul's a buddy of mine but what's the point of publishing a zine if you can't publicize your friends work? After I bought this CD (from [www.cdbaby.com](http://www.cdbaby.com)), I listened to it first thing every morning at work. I'd walk around the office singing to myself lyrics from the *Virginia* track. "I am a woman going mad, out of my head." My co-workers

must have thought I was mad, but that's OK because they are not my co-workers anymore.

Paul's music is rocky-beautiful if there is such a thing, while the lyrics, co-written with his lovely wife, Linda, stay with you for hours or sometimes even days after you turned off the stereo. Germans have term for this phenomenon. They call it an earworm.

## Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone By J. K. Rowling

I put off reading the Harry Potter books because if something is popular, then I automatically don't like it. Usually, this practice works. Just take for example *N'Sync* and the damn Titanic movie. Then young Harry Potter fell into my lap. My former place of employment needed the first and fourth book for something or other and I "borrowed" them afterwards. I still had to buy the second and third books, but by that time I had no choice in the matter. I was hooked.

I wonder why children and adults love the books with equal fervor. It think it's because a really good story has no age limit. Also, the characters jump off the page and take up roost in your brain (I wasn't using it anyway). The themes of good versus evil are simple, which frees your mind to imagine the Great Hall at Hogwarts.

Hollywood is making a Harry Potter movie, which is coming out in November. I'm sure I'll see it, but I don't think that a movie could ever measure up to how I imagine Harry, Ron, Hermione, Dumbledore and the other wonderful characters.

## [www.petfinder.org](http://www.petfinder.org)

I want a pet, but I know that I can't have a pet. I can't even keep my plants alive. But that doesn't stop me from torturing myself with this wonderful web site. You just put in your zip code and what kind of animal you are looking for, and they match you up with local shelters and rescue organizations. And the worst part is the pictures. It's hard to resist all those puppy dog eyes. And they don't just feature dogs and cats. You can find a horse or

# "Monstress is Hula-riffic!"

Monstress: The  
Other White Meat 4

Knit Happens 5

A girl's guide to a  
terrific career 6

Mom was right 8

Super Sloths 9

A Mid-westerner's  
Tour Guide to New  
York City 10

Dewey Decimal  
Rocks!! 11

Chhh-Changes 12

Penguin Pals 14

Why God, Why? 15

Dog Doo Diaries 16

More Neat Stuff  
Than You Could

Shake a Stick At 18

More Rules 20

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Nine out of  
ten swinging  
chicks prefer  
Monstress  
to getting a  
grass skirt  
wedgie.  
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# Monstress: The Other White Meat

*Monstress* is now on-line and ready for your perusal, thanks to my cousin Amy Lee. She is working her fingers to the bone posting my ramblings at [Monstress.org](http://Monstress.org).

I'm happy to report that I'm not quite as bitter these days as when I wrote the last issue of *Monstress*. I had a few readers say, "Wow, you really don't like New Jersey, do you?" I don't, but it's my best alternative for the time being. I wouldn't want to live in Manhattan even if I could afford it (which I can't), because I like having my car. Also, New Jersey is three miles closer to Ohio than New York. Summer is here and things don't seem so bad under blue skies. Plus, I'm taking psychotropic medication, which makes everything better. Sometimes when I'm skipping along the sidewalk whistling a little tune, I realize that my happiness is chemically induced. It's not an ideal situation, but it's better than being miserable.

In other *Monstress* news, I want to get a dog, but I can't because my landlord won't let me and moving isn't an option. So I just annoy my friends by endlessly discussing the type of animal I want to adopt and lunging after every cute dog I see. There's actually a dog at the Hudson County Humane Society that sounds perfect for me. Buster is a greyhound mix but has spent too much of his life in a cage. I'd like to adopt him, but I'm not home enough and he'd be stuck in a cage again, which wouldn't be fair. In a perfect world, I would get a cat. They are furry, sometimes loving, and shit in a box, but I'm deathly allergic to cats. My father has a cat which we call Kitty. He was a stray and my sister latched onto when I was away at my freshman year of band camp. Then right before my senior year of high school, my sister decided she wanted a dog as well. So the whole family went to the human society and adopted BeBe, who now lives with my mother. Mom often suggests that I could bring the dog to New Jersey, but I really don't think he would like living with me too much.

And now for something completely different

I just had to share this next item with all of you out there in *Monstress*-land. I get most of the artwork for

this fine publication from a clip art program that I stole from work. Technically I didn't steal it, since the company didn't have a use for it, but I didn't ask either. Regardless, sometimes when I'm looking for an image to illuminate these pages, I come across a strange picture. For example, the artwork above is called "Flying with Pork." I can just imagine a team of software developers somewhere in Silicon Valley having to come up with names to tens of thousands of boring clip-art images. So, when their boss is too busy picking his butt in his cushy office with a window, they slip in a title that is a bit kooky.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to thank Nicole from *The Reader's Guide to the Underground Press* for writing such a lovely review of *Monstress* #2.

This is one of the most pleasant zines I've ever read. I mean that is the best way. The articles are positive and upbeat, the design is beautiful, and there isn't an ounce of negativity to be found. My favorite piece is an article about what to do with that leftover foreign money you have after going on a trip abroad. International travel is sort of the theme for this issue, and it even includes some German food recipes. Other articles include "You Could Live in the Pittsburgh Airport" and a true story about a woman who knits sweaters for penguins, plus a few reviews that I never thought I'd see in a zine. Very highly recommended."

As always, I await with baited breath your delightful and thought-provoking missives. In other words, write to me at [erica@monstress.org](mailto:erica@monstress.org).



tion when they're puppies and then can't care for the dogs when they get bigger. It is an urban area, so dogs don't have wide open spaces to run around in. Or maybe people engage in dog fighting. Maybe if a hot young thing sees a man walking a big, strong dog, she's supposed to think he has a big penis. Who knows? The energetic dogs are housed in a separate building. I went in there once and it scared the crap out of me. The dogs got so excited that they inched their cages along the floor.

I won't let my fears get the best of me, so I make myself walk one of these feisty dogs during every visit (twice a week). I've learned that it's easier to control a dog if he has a choke collar on. These collars seem inhumane, but the dog isn't hurt if you yank quickly, because their necks are very thick. Usually, for the first two blocks, the dog walks me. And he relieves himself on the same stretch of fence every other dog does. A white pit bull with spotted ears and mismatched eyes likes to chew on the leash. He thinks it's a game of tug-of-war. At first, I ignored this behavior and kept walking. First time I tried this, the dog jumped for the leash and landed flat on his back. He just flipped himself over and lunged for the leash again. This tactic just makes the game more fun. I've learned the best thing to do is to stand there and wait for the dog to stop playing and get ready for some serious walking.

And we do some serious walking. I guess we probably walk a mile. That's if the dog is up for it. Some dogs plop down in the first patch of shade and sit. I would too if there wasn't broken glass and trash everywhere. But dogs aren't that picky. I've considered picking up the dog and carrying him back to the shelter, but usually when they start hearing the chorus of barking dogs as we approach the center, they perk up and suddenly want to walk.

I've learned from these dog days of summer. My desire to adopt a dog has waned. I've been reminded of all the care they need, especially in an urban area. And I see how a dog doesn't instantly latch onto a person. These dogs don't particularly want to be petted. They just want to walk as fast as they possibly can, sniff the sidewalk and pee on every lamp post. These are canine instincts.

But I don't like the looks I get when a dog stops to lift its leg. Passers by look at me like I'm the one making a puddle. And I really hate touching dog shit. I just don't think it's normal. In Ohio, the dog just craps in the yard. It makes the grass greener, although in the winter they become frozen logs.

My last day of walking dogs was Sept. 11. I accepted a job the day before. Spending my days with a warm computer rather than a cold nose isn't as satisfying, but it pays better and there's less shit involved.





# Dog Doo Diaries

I never thought that I would have to deal with this much crap on a regular basis and not get paid for it. At least not unless I gave birth first. I decided I should do something good for the world while I'm not working. I love animals, I need exercise and I should get out of the house. Dog walking seemed like a good solution. I called the local animal shelter, the Assisi Center in Jersey City and volunteered. The voice on the line said, "When can you get here?"

I got in my car and promptly got lost. One would think that after three years of living in Hudson County, I wouldn't get lost. But I do more often than I would like. I looked at a map before I left and the route seemed simple but real life didn't exactly match up with the printed page. After wandering around Jersey City for 45 minutes, I knew I was close when I heard 100 dogs barking. Such a ruckus I've never heard before.

The thing is that I'm afraid of dogs. When I was 11 years old, a cocker spaniel with a mohawk bit me. The dog belonged to a friend, who's older brothers fancied themselves punk rock dog groomers. No wonder it bit me. For the next six years, I wouldn't get close to dogs, even those who belonged to a family that swore the dog was friendly. That changed when my family adopted a mutt. After some time and lots of puppy love, I wasn't afraid of all dogs anymore. Still, I was cautious. Even the dog that I knew and loved would nip at me if I moved him while he was sleeping (Thus the adage, "Let sleeping dogs lie") or if he was hurt or scared. A few months ago I was waiting for a bus and a stray dog wandered by. I petted him and just assumed he was a nice dog. The dog must have thought I was pretty nice too because he jumped up on me. I grabbed his collar and held him at arms length. Then the dog started nipping at my arm. Everybody else at the bus stop thought I was just playing, but the truth was

that I was trying to get away from this dog with my hand intact. I went up some stairs of a church and a friend stood between me and the dog. I was terrified. The dog didn't break my skin, but I did have some bruising. I should have known better than to approach a dog without a leash, but he was cute and I was starved for animal contact. I also should have known better than to stick my finger in a rat cage in a pet store. It bit me, there was lots of blood and I almost passed out. But that's another story.

When I finally arrived, at the Assisi Center, already tired and sweating, Margaret gave me Ernie to walk. He was a tiny little fluff of a dog and the only dog who wasn't barking. We were off. I started walking down the street, around the corner, past a baseball field, and realized that I had no idea where I was. Not a good thing because the center is in an industrial area surrounded by subsidized housing projects. Where else would the city council allow a building with 90 barking and shitting dogs? So I did what any reasonable person would do and turned around and went back. I think I wore poor little Ernie out. But it didn't matter because when I found my way back, a family in a mini van was waiting for me. They adopted Ernie that day.

Many of the dogs I walk, I don't get to walk a second time. I'll come back a few days later and the cutie is gone. I'm glad for the dogs, but often I was looking forward to walking him or her again. I realize that I would rather walk the small, calm dogs rather than the big, barking, energetic dogs. It's not fair because the big dogs are the ones that need to burn off energy. But even though I go to the gym at least twice a week, I'm not strong enough for most of the dogs at the center. The Assisi Center has more than their share of pit bulls, rottweilers, german shepherds etc. Maybe people get them for protec-



## Knit Wit

Spring has arrived in Monstress-ville and a young woman's thoughts turn not to love, fresh produce or even "What the hell to do with the rest of my life," but

knitting. It is strange but true. My idea of a great Saturday night is knitting until my hands ache. This is one of the reasons I believe that I'm a blue-haired old woman trapped in a hot chick's body.

It doesn't stop at knitting. I also know how to crochet, cross-stitch, needlepoint and embroider with beads. I've been doing all of this since I was just a young lass. I learned to knit when I was 12 years old, when my mother and I were at the Dayton Art Institute Octoberfest stuffing our faces with gyros and huge pretzels. We wandered to a booth featuring expensive, but beautiful hand-knitted sweaters. Since I didn't have \$100 for a sweater at the time, I asked my mother if it was something I could do. Yeppers. On our way home, we stopped at Woolworth's and bought a set of knitting needles (which I still have) and a skein of cheap acrylic yarn. We sat on our hot pink chenille couch and my mother taught me the knit and purl stitches. I ran with it from there.

Similarly, I learned the basics of needlepoint and cross-stitching from Mom. One weekend I was home from college and dragged out a half-finished needlepoint eye-glass case with purple irises that my father had given my mother many years before. Mom showed me how to begin and end a length of yarn without using a knot and I figured out the rest out from there. Soon, I was locked in my dorm room spending too much time stitching an eye-glass case that I never put glasses in. In fact, I don't even know where the darn thing is anymore. Later, I had my wisdom teeth taken out five days before Christmas. Let me tell you, it is difficult to have a happy holiday season when you can't open your mouth wide enough to get in a forkful of blueberry pie. But I digress. Mom, in her never-ending wisdom, bought me a small, \$5 cross

stitch kit to occupy the miserable my hours of recovery until I no longer looked like a chipmunk. That winter, shut myself in my dorm room stitching my brains out. It was a particularly bad winter so I couldn't really go out and I was never a social butterfly in college.

Since then, I've knit, crocheted, cross stitched and needlepointed myself into bad posture and poor eyesight but I have some great wall hangings and more hats and scarves than you could shake a stick at. I would need to sprout two heads and move to Iceland just to make adequate use of the hats I've knitted. I did give some away but my friends and family don't seem to wear them much.

These days, about every other day, I get really frustrated with my job. I don't like taking orders from my bosses and I resent having doing other people's jobs for them (maybe this was why I got fired). And I sit in my cubicle and fantasize about becoming a professional knitter. Knitting is something I love to do and can do well. The real question is can I make a living off of it? I guess I could if I was a faster knitter. People are willing to pay for handmade crap just because it is handmade. I was in some trendy store in Soho and I saw a beautiful hand-knitted scarf that cost over \$300. I started to think this might be a real possibility for me when I found the same yarn on the Internet (it's hand-dyed and hand-spun wool yarn with variations of color from blue to pink). My other plan is to knit baby sweaters for Upper East Side mothers who wish they had the time or the patience to do such a thing for their child but instead they pay "mucho moola" for somebody else to do it. The one thing that brings me back to reality is the paycheck that is direct deposited into my checking account every two weeks. Then the idea of becoming a professional knitter doesn't seem so appealing. But it would be pretty cool to put that as a profession on your tax return or when some cute guy at a party asks you what you do for a living. No more lame answers like international swimsuit model or Wall Street stockbroker. The dude would remember you, for better or worse.

# "Oh No, Not the Paper clips!"

I lost my job. I love telling people that. It sounds as if I merely misplaced my job and if I just look in the last place I remember having it, I would find myself back in my cubicle opening my mail. But just like my virginity, my job is not coming back.

The news was a shock to me. I knew I was having problems at work but I didn't think it was bad enough to fire me. I still don't.

I went into my boss' office on a Monday afternoon thinking she had a project for me to work on. She started by telling me how well I'm doing and how I'm a joy I am to work with, but that I'm going to have to leave. Basically, I'm wonderful to work with but she doesn't want me doing her bidding for her anymore.

I like to think I was fired for a variety of reasons.

1. I was inept. I'll admit it. I wasn't doing the best possible job I could be doing. The gosh darn place made me miserable. It's really hard to do a good job if you dread going into the office every day.

2. The company had severe budget cuts. We couldn't order office supplies anymore. Packing tape and manila envelopes were kept under lock and key. Therefore, my theory is that I was getting too expensive. They could pay some chickie fresh out of college a heck of a lot less to do the same job and with less complaints. In fact, that's what they did, the Monday after I left.

3. It was time for me to move on but, I wasn't listening to what the universe was trying to tell me so I got a big



kick in the ass. It's for the best, really.

One of the many strange things about this experience was that I continued to work there for another month after I got my walking papers. My boss said she wanted to give me time to find a job. I think it was a ploy to avoid paying me more severance. And the really stupid thing is that I stayed. I was terrified about the prospect of impending financial ruin so I grasped at the bare root growing out of the crumbling, rocky cliff.

Another funny thing about getting fired, on my last day my boss gave me a bottle of Origins ginger bath oil. I guess it was a "sorry I had to fire you" gift. Or maybe she's telling me I just smell bad. Even if I am going to be living on the street, at least I won't smell like ass.

On my first day of unemployment, I picked up my dry cleaning, went to the post office, tied up the stacks of

# I just don't understand!

??

There are some things in this world that I just do not understand. I come from a family where the best way to end an argument is to claim that it doesn't make sense. If it indeed does not make sense, the other person concedes defeat and you both go off and discuss the weather. Therefore, when I see something that doesn't make sense, I don't believe it exists. Kind of like the, "I can't see you so you're not there" argument.

Here is just a short list of things that have no business existing on this planet.

1. Mascara remover. One evening, as I was rubbing off whatever eyelashes I have left, I noticed that my mascara remover is made by Maybelline, the same company that makes Great Lash. So, this company is making millions based on applying and removing colored wax. In fact, mascara itself doesn't make much sense to me. It makes your eyes stick together and when you make the mistake of trying to remedy the situation, you look like you've been in a fight.

2. Traffic. This opens up a whole new can of worms. I don't understand rubbernecking delays. What this means is that I have to sit in traffic for hours so that one yokel after another can get a good look at some idiot getting a speeding ticket. If we all just fought the urge to look, we could all get on with our lives.

3. Spoilers. I live in New Jersey, where you're lucky to drive 50 miles per hour. You're not going to be driving so fast that you need to stabilize your car to prevent it from taking flight. Therefore, these pieces of metal bolted to the trunk of a car is so that everybody else on the road thinks that you just got back from a trip to the Utah salt flats.

4. Reality TV. It's not reality. I can't remember the last time I found myself stranded on a desert island in the South China Sea with a dozen attractive people

and one naked, gay, fat guy. I watch TV to escape reality, not to experience it.

5. Sugar free candy. If there's no sugar in it, then what is it? I agree that diabetics deserve the same rights to deserts as the rest of us. But I don't want to eat candy if it doesn't rot my teeth or make me hyper.

6. Leather sofas. I think the purpose of furniture is there to curl up with your honey on a Saturday night and watch the latest Johnny Depp flick. You can't cuddle on leather. I once sat on a powder blue leather couch while I was naked and my thighs made sounds I hoped a member of the opposite sex would never hear. As for the powder blue leather couch, let's just say I wasn't dating him for his sense of style.

6. Lazy Mac. It's macaroni and cheese that you can make in the microwave. Have our lives really become so hectic that we can't take time to boil water?

7. Four servings. I was reading one of my favorite literary works: the back of a Ben and Jerry's ice cream container. They claim there's four servings. On a good day, there's maybe three. On a bad day it's one. I'm sure this is something the FDA made them do. That's cool. We all have to submit to the man every once in a while. For the record, my favorite is Triple Caramel Chunk.

8. Iron Chef USA. I had the misfortune to be home the night this monstrosity was aired. I should have known it would be bad because it's on UPN. Instead of the stylish and suave Chairman Kaga, we have William Shatner, who didn't wear nearly enough patterns or sequins. The American chef even took a cell phone call while he cooked. Another chef used fireworks in the presentation of his dish. One of the judges was a Playboy Playmate. And the whole thing was done in Las Vegas, which should explain it all. This show is the epitomizes of everything wrong with this country.



# SAVE THE PENGUINS!

I promised in *Monstress* #2 to print a pattern for knitted vests to be worn by penguins as soon as I found one. It took me a while, but I finally found it on the Internet. As a reminder, penguins need sweater vests because oil spills muck up feathers making it difficult for the birds to swim. And the layer of air between their feathers that keeps them warm is gone. Finally, when penguins try to remedy the situation by cleaning themselves, they ingest the oil, which is never a good thing. The vests prevent penguins from poisoning themselves, keeps them warm, and saves thousands of my favorite aquatic bird. Plus, they look cute.

These instructions are from Australia, so some of the terms may be unfamiliar to knitters, but a good reference book from the library should help.

## Penguin Jumpers

### Supplies:

4 ply wool

1 pair No. 3 needles

1 pair No. 2 needles

With No. 2 needles cast on 50 stitches.

K10 rows in K1, P1 rib

Change to No. 10 needles and K2, P2 rib whilst increasing at the end of every row 6 times (62 stitches) then continue to knit in 2 x 2 rib until garment measures 15cm.

Decrease one st at each end of every row until 36 stitches remain. In the next row decrease one st at each end and also one st in the middle of the row to leave 33 sts.

Change to K1, P1 rib with Size 3 needles.

Knit 11 rows and cast off firmly on Row 12.

This is one side of garment. Make another and sew up from upper decrease to start of rib open for flippers. Add elastic to the top and bottom to prevent the penguins getting out of them. Top: 15cm of elastic; bottom 17cm (knots allowed).



Another pattern using different yarn.

### Supplies:

8 ply wool

1 pair No. 3 needles

1 pair of No. 4 needles

1 set of No. 3 double-pointed needles

Cast on 36 stitches using No. 11 needles

K1, P1 to end of row. Repeat this row 7 times.

Change to No. 4 needles and K2, P2 rib. Work 4 rows increasing at each end of every row. (44 sts)

Continue until work measures 15 cms

Decrease 1 st at each end of every row until 28 sts remain.

Decrease 1 st. in middle of next row (27 sts)

Leave on needle. Make second side the same.

Transfer the 54 sts from both pieces to 3 of the set of 4 No. 11 needles (18 sts on each) and work a round neck in K1 P1 rib for 10 rows. Cast off.

Stitch up sides to decreasing to 27 sts (opening for flipper). Add elastic to the top and bottom to prevent the penguins getting out of them. Top: 15cm of elastic; bottom 17 cm (knots allowed).

Please send completed jumpers to:

Tasmanian Conservation Trust

102 Bathurst Street

Hobart, Tasmania 7000

Australia

Email: [tct@southcom.com.au](mailto:tct@southcom.com.au)

newspapers that were threatening to topple over and crush me to death, watched *Oprah* and made a Jello salad. At one point, I even considered scrubbing my kitchen trash can because it smells bad. Then I realized that after only half a day of not working, I considered scraping goo off the bottom of my trash can as an acceptable way to spend my time. I think I'm going to go nuts before I find a job.

Everybody says that I am remarkably upbeat about my lack of employment and I have the right attitude. The real reason that I'm not distraught and ready to jump off a tall building is because I am taking good brain-altering drugs. In fact, soon after my boss told me she was firing me, my doctor upped my dosage and I've never felt better. Anti-depressants and therapy helped me realize that I was working in a shit hole that wouldn't let me use packing tape. Speaking of strange office supply policy, about six months ago, the "powers that be" (aka people blessed with offices that have doors) told us wage-slaves not to use paper clips. We had to use staples or binder clips or some other way to attach one piece of paper to another. Let's review: this woman chose not to address the lack of office morale or the fact that she is the only employee who goes home at a normal hour. She chose to send an email to the entire, underpaid staff about the overuse of paper clips.

But I digress.

After a few weeks of unemployment, I'm actually starting to enjoy it. I call my friends and family in the middle of the day just because I need to hear a human voice that doesn't come from the TV or radio. I'm more aware of the rest of the world because I listen to public radio all day and I allow myself to watch ABC World News Tonight at 6:30 pm. I am able to enjoy the lovely summer weather and watch the wind in a tree. And I bake. Although, I really should find a hobby that isn't so fattening. One morning, I went for a walk to the local park. I watched the kids out on summer break play while the mothers and other caregivers gossiped on park benches. One little girl sat on a swing and asked her 3-year-old sister to push her. The toddler gave her a big push. Her sister swung back and knocked the girl flat on her butt.

As I watched and tried not to laugh at this beautiful little girl, I realized that this is how real people live. It means not having to ask somebody about the weather outside. It's about cooking your own meals and eating at a table. It's reading a book in two days because you want to. Real life doesn't happen in a cubicle and it has nothing to do with paper clips.

## More news from the battlefield

My former boss, the one I refer to as "the evil one who shall not be named," was fired.

The woman worked at this company since 1976, the year I was born. She's never had another job. She doesn't know how to do anything other than be evil. Ironically a few months ago, this woman sent an email to her staff (I still have connections, which I how I got my hands on it) that sounded vaguely like she knew something was going to happen. It recounted her 25-year career and how she wore gaucho pants to her first day at work. Also, she mentioned how she managed to move up the ranks because her boss liked the way that she dressed. Personally, I didn't think she dressed that well, but then again, I'm no fashion plate myself.

I guess I should mention why I and others thought she was evil. I could not leave the building without her permission. I couldn't even go to lunch unless I told her first. My good friend, Aminda, had the job before me. She had to find a certain brand of gourmet spaghetti sauce that the evil one liked. My dear friend also had to buy shoes for this woman. It was an assistant position, so expected to do some stupid stuff, but calling for Saks Fifth Avenue's Sunday hours so she could go shopping with her niece was just ridiculous.

When I heard the news, I had to ask myself, "Do feel vindicated now that she's been fired?" Not really. I know what it's like to not know what you're going to do with the rest of your life, or even tomorrow afternoon. But I do believe in karma and if you don't treat people well, it will come back to you. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon. I'm just glad to see my theory in action.

# Turning into your parents isn't so bad

I find that as I enter the second half of my 20's, I'm slowly turning into my parents. This isn't a bad proposition, but in my younger form, I thought my parents were the epitomizes of everything uncool. My father knows one dance move, "The Swim." He danced around the living room by using not just the front crawl, but the breast-stroke, backstroke, butterfly and even side stroke. My mother just did a modified walk when she moved her hips from side to side while making a clucking noise with her tongue. I'm guessing they did this to make my sister and I laugh. It worked. But, now I find that if I'm anxious or bored, I'll walk around in a circle swinging my hips. On more than one occasion, I have done the swim at a dance club.

But wait, there's more. When I'm in an airport waiting for a flight, I hold my book the same way my father does, placed on a crossed leg. My father would stroke his beard while reading. Since I can't grow facial hair, I massage my eyebrow instead. In supermarkets, I smile at every baby I see, just like Dad and buy large amounts of food just because it was on sale same as my mother who came from a large Catholic family. And to deal with stress, Mom taught me to have chocolate in the house at all times.

This type of thing happens to all people once they reach a certain age. I suppose it happens to some of us earlier than others. From what I've heard, some people don't realize they are the same as their parents until they have children of their own and find themselves yelling, "Not under my roof." For me it happened rather gradually. The chocolate thing appeared during my soph-

omore year of college. The reading thing appeared last Christmas when I was stuck in the Pittsburgh airport and I rubbed off half of my eyebrow. Just yesterday I looked in my pantry and found five pounds of pasta. Granted, it will only take three or four weeks to eat all if it but I still find it excessive. It reminds me of when I looked in my mother's cabinet and found a dozen cans of cut green beans.

I don't think it's a bad thing that I am slowly turning into my parents. They are good people. They pay their bills on time, they don't put cars on blocks in the front yard and they managed to raise two wonderful daughters, even if I do say so myself.

Despite all of our similarities, I have done some things in my life that my parents wouldn't ever dream of doing. I jumped out of a perfectly good airplane. I have a piece of stainless steel stuck in my bellybutton. When my mother first saw my piercing, she told me I looked like trash. When my father saw

it, he only asked me when I got it done. And I moved away from Dayton, Ohio, something

that my parents never did. Maybe they are wiser than me, maybe I'm just more adventurous. I'm not sure which.

Often, when I drive around in my sensible Japanese car, another parental innovation, I think about how my children will turn out. I wonder if they will think that I am the coolest mother in the world or if they will pretend I'm a stranger when we are in public. I also wonder what kind of child will come slipping and sliding out of my womb. Will she dye her hair blue and protest global warming or will she be a card-carrying member of the NRA? I guess that's the crap shoot called parenting.



Me and Dad

my abdomen is swollen and I could be one of those victims of fertility drugs and carrying two. By the way, bus travellers are kinder but less astute than underground riders.

2. "Is it THAT hot in here?" When I am hot flashing, especially in a crowd "think of me, with kindness stranger," as in a character in a Tennessee William's play; not necessarily fragile, just having a hard time at the moment.

3. Don't go all Stanley and challenging on me. DO NOT COVER WHEN I VENT AND RAGE! What's needed is a little humor. Ask yourself, "What would Homer Simpson say?" "Calm down. Don't make me put a dog heart in there"

The rage is disguised as the out-of-control monstress when it is actually the shedding of past bondages. Emerging from that cocoon will be a beautiful butterfly. Until then, to the rest of the world you could be Mothra.

4. "Oh, you got a lot of sun" Sure I did. But only my head, in the middle of winter.

Signs at the entrance to hip trendy department stores like H&M should direct all menopausal women to the men's department. Wandering around in the racks of women's clothes that need very little flesh poured into them to give them life and despairing of ever finding anything to fit. I spied a table heaped with scrunchies! But my joy was short-lived when I caught sight of my short-haired reflection in the mirror. The men's department was a mother-lode of wearable and trendy togs and not a scrunchie in sight.

Change is the key word here. Keep beating yourself up to a minimum. Change your attitude and definition of beauty. Those bee-stung lips on Hollywood stars will begin to look like cheese allergies in another 20 years. Learn to say "No!" to things; the job that has given you nothing but a paycheck, comfort foods that have added to your physical discomfort, trophy friendships. Be open to surprises and then surprise yourself. Don't be afraid to cherish. Don't be afraid to discard.

And if people return your flushed gaze with barely contained horror or the equally insidious studied indifference, just tell them, "I'm in dry cleaning."





You can run but you can't hide from...

# "The Change"

by Linda Danz

I recently read an interview with a cartoonist who inadvertently summed up this business of menopause for me. "The business of art is very strange," he said. "I used to try to explain the business, but now I just say I'm in dry cleaning"

For the uninitiated, let me tell you what to expect. Renegade arthritis is frightening at first, until you can convince yourself that your body is not inhabited by aliens. (Disregard if your sexual partner is an Englishman). Little random aches and pains are your body's way of telling you it's time to really pay attention to the myriad bits of yourself. The weight gain is to protect you from the idiots. It's a barrier of sorts, but can be temporary. At night, expect a run of dreams featuring severed-heads, cold sweats, night sweats and bed clothes twisted in knots so you pray your cat hasn't been strangled in during the night. An inexplicable need to curl up with the latest Harry Potter book will dominate even the most pressing chores. Just let it be as you slowly realize you are going through pre-adolescence all over again.

Hormones will rage. Your acne-covered face will stare at you from the mirror. No one will understand you. You are learning to say NO! all over again. Temporary memory loss in any situation will be followed by rising body temperature that skips everything below the neck leaving those areas feeling bloodless. Then your head explodes like a cartoon thermometer.\* A woman's body temperature during a hot flash can go from normal to 105 degrees in ten seconds flat. I understand that sexual appetite changes individually. Mine has not diminished. It has shifted but continues to flow. Many things will shift during menopause, including worn-out relationships.

But a good one will flow with the changes. It's the shifting and the sifting that will leave a clear path to a rebirth. I know it sounds corny, but think of it as childbirth without the placenta or the child.

There is light at the end of the tunnel, but it's the incoming train. Not the oncoming train. This is the train that you will hop aboard for an adventure in your own New Age. What will be your first stop in this Brave New Great Adventure World? It had better be the gym. Let's cut to the chase here. If you have always been repulsed by the mossy smell and the dark dankness of a gym, (involuntary Proustian recall has its painful moments. It ain't all lime blossom tea and rustling linen) get over it. No matter when you come to this decision it is never too late. Find a gym with the same properties you demand of a frequented pub. For me, it should be local. Clean but not scary clean where the service gets friendlier with time. Trust me. Relatively habitual workouts at the gym (okay, sportsclub) will stave off homicide or infanticide if you have been foolish enough to postpone motherhood.

I have read a fair amount of books on "The Change." Some have brilliant insights garnered from great works of literature. Many encourage alternative natural therapies. More than a few are in jokey cartoon form. Some are illustrated with dead leaves on the cover and they aren't joke books. Read the angry women. Germaine Greer is on our side. Read the funny women.

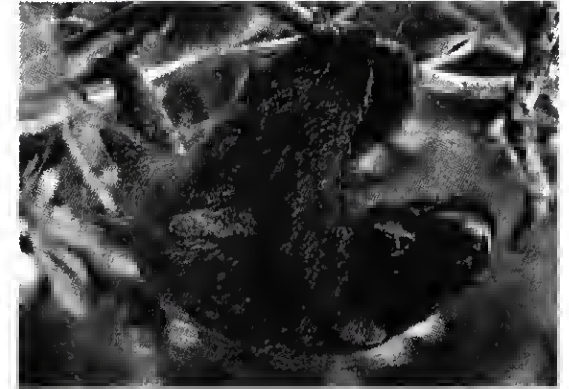
In the true spirit of nurturing here are a few thoughts on what not to say to me at my menopausal nadir:

i. "Would you like to sit down?" (asked on public transportation). This can only mean you think I am too old to be pregnant but offer me a seat nonetheless because

# HOW MUCH IS THAT SLOTH IN THE WINDOW

I've given a lot though about what I kind of creature I would like to be in my next life. I'm convinced that being a human is not the highest state of existence or the eventual goal for the universe. I think that animals are closer to Nirvana than any person can ever hope to be. Sure, animals have to worry about being eaten and they may never know the joys of Cherry Garcia ice cream, but they don't have to pay rent or worry about silly things like clothing. For a while I thought that being a dog would be a good deal. They get walked twice a day, take naps whenever they want and then get their belly scratched the rest of the time. But then I started volunteering at the local animal shelter and realized that many dogs don't have it so good. Then I thought about coming back as a cat. Cats sleep even more than dogs and they don't have to wait for someone else to relieve themselves. And cats can ignore their owners all day except for dinner time. Although house pets have it pretty good, I think I've discovered the animal I would like to be in my next life, not that I have a choice in the matter.

A three-toed sloth. These lovely, amazing animals, who are native to Central and South America, don't move much, except when they travel from tree to tree to



search of food, and have few natural predators. Sloths are so slow that algae grows on their fur, which helps them blend into the surrounding foliage, thus decreasing the chance of getting eaten. A sloth can take a month to digest a big meal, which is mostly leaves. Sloths spend most of their time upside-down and even give birth hanging from a tree branch. Regardless of their gangly appearance on the ground, they are excellent, graceful swimmers and travel between groves of river trees doing a doggie paddle (sloth paddle?).

And possibly the most wonderful thing about a sloth, they always look like they're smiling. It's just the way their fur is colored, but they still seem like incredibly happy animals.

Granted, life isn't all hunky dorey for the three-toed sloth. Their rain forest environment is disappearing and there's always a danger of getting eaten by a jaguar. But I'd rather hang from the trees, go for an occasional swim, then get eaten by a big cat than get chewed up and spit out by corporate America any day. Wouldn't you?





# A Mid-Westerner's guide to New York.

Nobody knows how difficult it can be for a Mid-Westerner to adjust to life in the big city better than me. Wave farewell to wide open spaces and wildlife that isn't a rat. In return, you'll have the opportunity to eat at a restaurant that doesn't have a corporate headquarters or feature chili cheese fries on their menu. You'll be in a city with more than one art museum and won't have to wait until the traveling production of *Les Miserables* comes to your town to satiate your theatre fix. I've learned a few coping strategies that helped me adapt to life on the East Coast.

1. When you're standing on the subway platform, "To Bronx" means north and "To Brooklyn" means south. When I came to New York for an internship three years ago, I didn't realize that subway signs don't always specify "Uptown" or "Downtown." So I would stand on the platform thinking to myself, "Rockefeller Center isn't in Brooklyn."

2. You are going to have to learn which way is East or West. I'm ashamed to admit that it took me two years to learn. After all, in Ohio, I got around using landmarks, not really paying attention to which direction I was going. All I needed to know was that Michigan is north and Kentucky is south. But in New York, cardinal directions are essential because East 42nd street is very different from West 42nd street. You can finally put your scouting knowledge to good use.

3. There is an Olive Garden in Times Square and a Hard Rock Cafe on West 57th street. You may have to ease yourself into the wonderful world that is East Coast cuisine. It can be very intimidating especially if you have

no idea what "Asian fusion" fare is. After a while, you'll dip into Indian, Afghan, Thai, Japanese and Vietnamese restaurants, just like wading into the frigid swimming pool on the first day of summer.

4. When you're lost, please don't stand in the middle of the sidewalk. New Yorkers get really annoyed if they have to walk around you and it gives all Mid-Westerners a bad reputation.

5. When in doubt about how to get somewhere, stop at a token booth and get a subway map. It's free and you can

get a pretty good idea where you are and where you need to be.

6. When people try to stop you on the street to talk to them, keep walking, even if they are smiling and seem just swell. Chances are these people are not trying to engage you in friendly conversation, like one would expect in the Midwest, but trying to sell you something that you don't need because if you live anywhere other than the tri-state area you can obtain anything you

could ever possibly need at Wal-Mart.

7. There is no Wal-Mart. The closest thing in Manhattan is Duane Reade, which is a drug store with practically everything. They are strategically located every two blocks. In fact, there are two just in Port Authority Bus Terminal. There is a K-Mart at Astor Place, but it's just not the same.

8. Soft-serve ice cream just isn't the same. It has more air whipped into it so it feels like a wet marshmallow in your mouth. And the sprinkles are mushy, not crunchy. My advice is if you want something cold and creamy, get pre-packaged ice cream on a stick.



# Shhhh!

I can't think of a single thing not to love about libraries. They are quiet, have lots of books and it gives you a good excuse to avoid talking to people. My father has more library cards than credit cards in his wallet. At one time, I carried around four library cards, but then I decided I didn't need two from Ohio because I hadn't stepped foot in either for almost three years.

I've spent many a happy hour in a library and have paid a lot of money in overdue fines. In fact, after my sophomore year of college, the university wouldn't send me my grades until I paid my fines. I had so many library books piled up on my desk that I had to take two trips to the library to return them all. I miss having a large research library at my disposal, but then again, I never really understood the Library of Congress cataloging system. I guess at heart, I'm a Dewey Decimal kind of gal.

Winters Library, Bellbrook Ohio

This library is named after comedian Jonathan Winters' aunt who lived in downtown Bellbrook. The library is small, really just one room. But it is cozy. Often, I would visit after school for reading material and I would run into my friends. Perhaps this means my friends and I were geeks, but that's why we were friends.

New York Public Library, New York, NY

It took me a while to figure that the big library on Fifth Avenue (the one with the statues of lions) is a different library than every other library in the five boroughs. My first month in the city, I climbed up the marble stairs, past the lions to get some escapist fiction for the bus ride. This is not a library for the casual reader. I was in the research library where they have anything you could possibly need, but can't find it. If you do find a book you want, you write it down on a slip of paper and then wait in the main reading room until your number is called and then you pick up your book. On my way out, a kind librarian pointed me across the street to the smaller Mid-Manhattan branch, which is much more suited to peo-

ple like me. My one complaint, besides the long lines at the check-out, is that books are often missing. You'll find it on their Leo-Line system, but it isn't on the shelf. My favorite feature is that you can renew books over the phone, a god-send for someone like me.

Union City Public Library, Union City NJ

This library is so old and outdated that they still use a card catalog. And their selection is meager unless you like the classics, which nobody in Union City reads. But I like the architecture of the 15th street branch. Over the circulation desk is a lovely rotunda and the reading tables are huge slabs of solid wood. And it's quiet and has that musty library smell.

Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore MD

I have no idea what a non-free library is, but Baltimore is very proud of their libraries. And for good reason. There's a good mix of serious research opportunities and beach reading. There is also a career resource room, accessible periodicals and free internet access. Finally, it's a pleasant place to sit, read, and daydream under the gaze of portraits of dead white men.

